

In Limbo by Luddleston

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Summary:

Kaidan's been back on the Normandy for all of four days when he heads down to check out the weapons bench in the shuttle bay and gets an earful of first-hand knowledge that this crew is just as rowdy as Shepard's first bunch.

Or: Vega and Cortez give Garrus their advice on wooing Shepard, and Kaidan becomes an unwitting participant in a demonstration of James Vega's best *moves*.

In Limbo

Author's Note:

I've had this sitting around on my google docs for like a month and I think I was considering putting more stuff on the end there but I have absolutely no idea what it was so here is this little guy.

Having James & Kaidan on the Normandy together is my favorite part of Mass Effect 3. My two special boys. James' banter with Garrus is also hilarious and strangely emotional. Basically I just love James Vega he's such a good lad. I wish I could have 3 crew members just to have James, Garrus, and Kaidan with me at all times

Kaidan's been back on the Normandy for all of four days when he heads down to check out the weapons bench in the shuttle bay and gets an earful of first-hand knowledge that this crew is just as rowdy as Shepard's first bunch.

Instead of Wrex looking at everyone like he might headbutt first, think later, and Ashley trying to shoot target practice *inside the ship* ("it's just a pistol, LT, it can't pierce the hull!"), it's Vega and Cortez heckling Garrus about something, the particulars of which Kaidan tries to interpret as he pokes around. They're all right in the middle of the room, so it's impossible not to overhear, and Kaidan tells himself he's not being gossipy if they're being so loud.

"Nah, nah, you might not be able to get all nice and cozy with somebody with all the spikes, but you can still be a romantic," Vega's saying. He's not trying to be quiet and even if he was, his voice carries.

Cortez actually is trying to be quiet, so Kaidan doesn't quite catch his rejoinder.

"Sweep her off her feet! That's *amor*, Vakarian."

"When Turians sweep somebody off their feet, it's usually in combat," Garrus says.

"No, you've gotta like—" there's a pause, and Kaidan looks over his shoulder to catch a little bit of James doing some sort of motion even *he* can't interpret, and he's human. "Eh? Get it?"

"I do not," says Garrus.

"Lemme demonstrate. Ey, Alenko!"

He's made the mistake of walking past them (all he wanted to do was check out the Alliance's new automated system for requisitions) and even though he just answers with "*uh...*" James says "*great!*" like he's given his resounding consent.

Kaidan's not sure what he's expecting, but it sure as hell isn't for James to grab one of his hands, put his other arm around Kaidan's waist, and tip him right over. Anybody else would've flat-out dropped him, but James catches him and then swings him back up onto his feet, grinning at Garrus like he's just perfectly explained whatever the hell it was he was on about.

Kaidan's head is still spinning, personally. Garrus looks amused but not like he's understanding, and Cortez is the only solid presence there, one hand on Kaidan's shoulder. He's less reassured by the fact that Cortez says, "come on, Vega, that's not how you do it. You can't just throw your partner around like a sack of potatoes."

"You gonna show me how it's done?" James asks, standing with his hands planted on his hips, perfectly cocky.

"Sure. May I, Major?" Cortez asks, which proves that they *do* remember he outranks them, they just don't care. What kind of a ship is Shepard running?

Kaidan doesn't know why the hell he says, "well, I don't really know what the hell Vega was trying to do, so, sure."

Garrus is grinning, as much as a Turian grins.

"While I don't doubt that Garrus is strong enough to do whatever you just did, it works better if you lean with them." Cortez also grabs Kaidan's hand, but it's neat and impersonal, like he's tugging Kaidan onto the shuttle. His arm around Kaidan's back is more invasive, but he doesn't drop Kaidan backward and leave his stomach lurching like James did.

Kaidan finally realizes James was trying to *dip* him, because Cortez does a much better job of it. As he explained, he leans with Kaidan, which means they stay relatively close together, and he watches a wry grin spread over Cortez's face. Probably in response to how flustered Kaidan definitely looks.

He pulls Kaidan back up with that same friendly clasp of his hand, setting him on his feet like this is just something guys do to their friends. Maybe it is. Kaidan doesn't have a lot of close friends around.

"See?" he says. "Much more balanced that way."

Garrus is nodding, but he still looks quietly amused by Kaidan's suffering.

"Okay, lemme try again," James says, holding out a hand to Kaidan.

"*Why* are you doing this?" Kaidan finally asks.

"Shepard," Garrus says, like it explains everything. Maybe it does. Kaidan heard she and Garrus were an item. First Liara, now this—if Shepard really is as into extraterrestrials as it seems, maybe Kaidan never stood a chance in the first place.

"Oh. Well, you probably need all the help you can get." He can't imagine Turian-human relationships are easy to work out, geometrically, that is. Shepard and Garrus are certainly compatible in every other way, right down to how much they like aiming big guns at things.

James takes this as a go-ahead and grabs Kaidan's hand again. This time, he doesn't move in quite the same whirlwind, and it's worse. Nice and slow,

means Kaidan gets to trace the track of the scars up James' jaw and lip and look straight into those big brown eyes. He's got his brows furrowed like he's concentrating on doing this right. His arm around Kaidan's back is warmer than Cortez's was.

He leans Kaidan back and it's not perfect, it's pretty clumsy, in fact, but they're chest-to-chest and breathing the same air. It's awkward as hell and Kaidan doesn't know why his heart's thumping out of control. This is the part where you'd kiss somebody, right? Obviously James isn't going to do that to demonstrate, but in that moment it feels wildly like it *could* happen.

Then James straightens up, steps back, looks at Cortez for approval. Cortez shrugs, like, "*you did fine, I guess.*"

Garrus is giving Kaidan this weird look with his head cocked, his mandibles parted like he's about to say something, but nothing comes out.

James clears his throat. "Anyway, you pull one of those on Shepard, I bet you've got this in the bag."

"I plan to, you know, ask her if she wants to be with me *before* we get to the embracing," Garrus says.

"That's probably reasonable," Cortez agrees.

Kaidan's just thinking that he probably *should* feel weird about Garrus talking like that about Shepard, especially given the feelings he's alternately nursed and then trampled and then nursed again for his commander over the years.

But instead, he can't stop thinking about warm hands on his back, scars across mouths, and the concentration it took to get an embrace right.